



## Board lays groundwork for reviewing state testing system

By Cathy Lindsey  
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The Kentucky Board of Education in August continued discussions about the upcoming Request for Proposals for a new testing contract and reviewed Kentucky's writing assessment.

Because Kentucky's testing contract with CTB McGraw-Hill expires in September 2006, the board is reviewing components of the testing system —

including writing, arts and humanities, and other elements — to see if they can be improved. CTB McGraw-Hill's contract includes work on the Kentucky Core Content Tests (KCCT), Norm-Referenced Test (NRT) and the writing portfolio.

Before drafting the requirements for the next contract, Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit and department staff have been soliciting input from educators and students concerning issues these two groups would like addressed in the

current assessment and accountability program. The commissioner presented to the board "Seven Steps Forward in Assessment," which he feels have the potential to address legislative and board concerns, respond to the issues voiced by educators, and help schools set and achieve high standards.

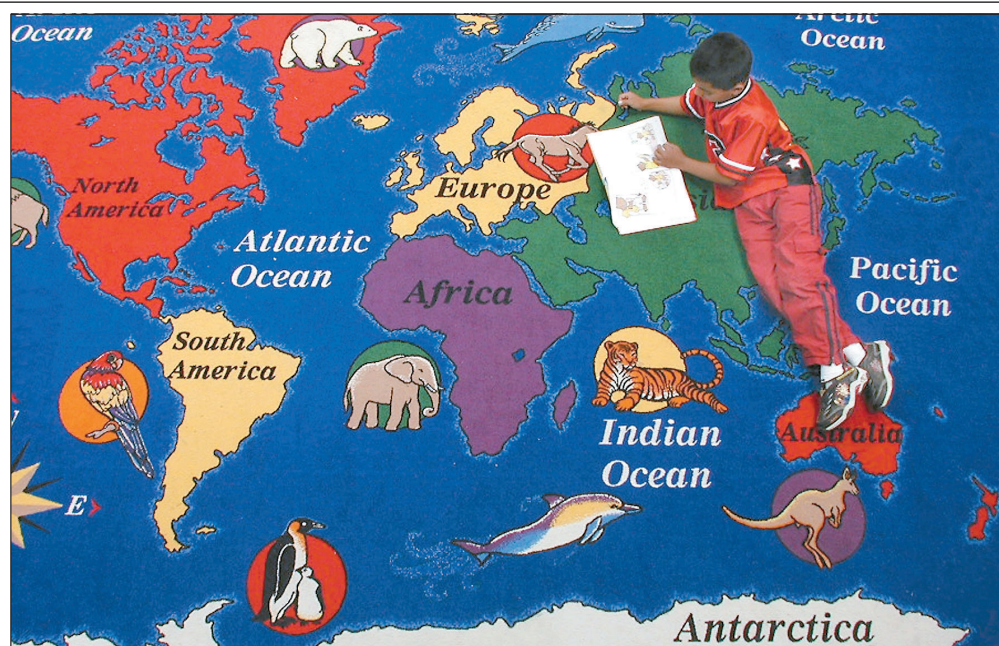
The seven steps are:

- updating content and student performance standards
- enhancing writing and arts assessments

with guidance from the National Technical Advisory Panel on Assessment and Accountability (NTAPAA), to develop a schedule for upgrading all content standards to ensure that Kentucky's standards are aligned and consistent with national and international standards. Wilhoit said it is critical that these revisions and upgrades be completed as soon as possible, beginning immediately with mathematics and language arts, and including all content areas. During coming months, department staff will develop, then present to the board, recommendations to help ensure that teachers are teaching to — and assessing — the correct content standards and that the state-required assessments are in line with these standards.

As part of its review of the writing assessment, the department recently convened a focus group that will draft recommendations to present to the board at its October meeting in Frankfort. The focus group is exploring ways to equalize

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### Global perspective on studying

Eduardo Rodriguez, a 3rd grader at Western Elementary in Scott County, finds a comfortable place to study on a rug that depicts the seven continents of the world. Last school year, Kentucky schools served approximately 8,500 students whose primary language is not English. This was a 24 percent increase from 2002-2003 and a 316.7 percent increase over the past 10 years.

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## Snapshot assessments capturing 5th graders' mathematics skills

By Cathy Lindsey  
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How many snapshots have you taken of family and friends to capture a moment in time? Snapshots document where we are at certain stages in our lives — some reflect casual times, others reflect momentous occasions.

The same can be said for the online assessments 5th graders are using at Saffell Street Elementary in Anderson County, where teachers use these "snapshot" assessments intermittently to determine where students are in their level of mathematics skills.

"We were needing a site for teachers and students that would contain practice materials, online resources and content correlated with the Kentucky Core Content and units of study," said Anderson County Chief Information Officer Charlotte Wright.

Wright researched how the district could implement

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## Mountjoy steps down as state board chair

After six years as chair of the Kentucky Board of Education, Helen W. Mountjoy of Daviess County relinquished the gavel at the board's August meeting. Keith Travis of Marshall County was selected to lead the board for the coming year. The board chair is selected at the beginning of each fiscal year, according to state law.

A former teacher and former chair of the Daviess County Board of Education, Mountjoy said that her six years as chair of the state board were not easy for the board or education in Kentucky. However, she said, results show that Kentucky public schools are making significant progress in student achievement, in all parts of the state and affecting all students.

She said the board has accomplished many monumental tasks, but not without the support and hard work of state legislators, teachers, administrators, parents, community leaders, education partners, Department of Education employees and members of the media.

Under her leadership in 1997, the state board rebuilt Kentucky's early education reform system and established the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS). CATS is recognized as one of the best state assessment and

accountability systems in the nation.

Led by state legislation, the board also began working with schools to identify and publicly acknowledge gaps that were occurring in student achievement. Kentucky schools and districts developed strategies to close those gaps before the federal

hinder Act (NCLB) required states to do so.

Additionally, the board began closer oversight of the Kentucky School for the Deaf and the Kentucky School for the Blind, during Mountjoy's term as chair. Impressive gains in student achievement at these institutions are occurring as a result, and services to these student populations in schools throughout the state are improving.

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Mountjoy



# Bulletin Board



## Conferences

### Social Work

The 37th Midwest School Social Work Conference will be held Oct. 7-9 at the Galt House in Louisville. The conference theme is “Race for Success – No Child Left at the Gate.”

[www.kassw-ky.org/midwestinfo.html](http://www.kassw-ky.org/midwestinfo.html)

### Health and Physical Education

The Kentucky Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance will hold its annual conference Oct. 28-30 at Drawbridge Inn in Ft. Mitchell. The pre-registration deadline is Oct. 14.

For more information, contact [lonnie.davis@eku.edu](mailto:lonnie.davis@eku.edu) or go to [www.kahperd.com](http://www.kahperd.com).

### Mathematics

The Kentucky Council of Teachers of Mathematics 2004 conference will be held Oct. 30 at Second Street School in Frankfort. Pre-registration is \$40 for members. On-site registration is \$80.

[www.kctm.org/conference.html](http://www.kctm.org/conference.html)

### KTLC Call for Presenters

The Kentucky Teaching and Learning Conference (KTLC), “Pathways to Proficiency ’05,” is looking for presenters for the conference. The event is scheduled March 3-5, 2005, at the Kentucky International Convention Center in Louisville.

Applications to present are available online and must be submitted by Sept. 13. Go to [www.kentuckytlc.org](http://www.kentuckytlc.org) and click on “Call for Presenters.”

For more information, e-mail [ktlc@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:ktlc@kde.state.ky.us).

## Events

### Grant Writing Workshop

The Grant Institute’s Grants 101: Professional Grant Proposal Writing Workshop will be held at the University of Louisville, Sept. 7-9. The course is designed for both the beginning grant writer and those who want to strengthen their grant writing skills.

For more information call toll free (888) 824-4424 or visit [www.thegrantinstitute.com/programs/grants101.htm](http://www.thegrantinstitute.com/programs/grants101.htm) on the Web.

### Legislators’ Back-to-School Week

Members of the Kentucky General Assembly are participating in the America’s Legislators Back to School program by visiting Kentucky classrooms during the third week of September. They will share ideas, listen to concerns and help students better understand the legislative process and how it develops public policy.

Lesson plans for grades 4-12 are available online from the National Conference of State Legislatures at [www.ncsl.org/public/backsch.htm](http://www.ncsl.org/public/backsch.htm). For information about the event in Kentucky, contact the state coordinator, Sheila Mason, at the Legislative Research Commission at (502) 564-8100 or by e-mail at [sheila.mason@lrc.state.ky.us](mailto:sheila.mason@lrc.state.ky.us).

### Fossil Festival

The Falls of the Ohio State Park in Southern Indiana will host the Falls Fossil Festival, Sept. 18-19. The event will include children’s activities, Liter’s Quarry fossil dig, speakers, free resources, door prizes, fossil bed hikes and more. There also will be free rock, mineral and fossil identification, so bring in your unknowns. Teachers may register for a chance to win a geological collection for their classroom.

[www.fallsoftheohio.org/fossil\\_festival.shtml](http://www.fallsoftheohio.org/fossil_festival.shtml)

### Fulbright Program

The Fulbright Program arranges direct one-to-one classroom exchanges to more than 30 countries for elementary and secondary teachers, as well as two-year and four-year college educators. Administrators can participate in six-week shadowing experiences in nine countries. The application deadline is Oct. 15, for the 2005-2006 academic year.

[www.fulbrightexchanges.org/](http://www.fulbrightexchanges.org/)

## Resources

### MAC grants

Teachers in grades 6-8 can apply for a McDonald’s MAC grant to Make Activities Count in their classrooms. MAC grants offer up to \$500 to help Kentucky middle school teachers create hands-on learning activities. The application deadline is Sept. 15.

[www.bch.com/mac\\_grants.htm](http://www.bch.com/mac_grants.htm)

### Keats Foundation grants

The Ezra Jack Keats Foundation offers “mini-grants” of \$350 to school and public libraries for programs that encourage literacy and creativity in children. The application deadline is Sept. 15.

[www.ezra-jack-keats.org/programs/minigrants.htm](http://www.ezra-jack-keats.org/programs/minigrants.htm)

Bulletin Board is compiled by Cathy Lindsey  
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### Military Mail

The Fan Mail for the Troops campaign has been successfully integrated into many courses of study and adopted in schools across the U.S. as a writing activity for students at all levels.

[www.troopfanmail.net/schools.htm](http://www.troopfanmail.net/schools.htm)

### Teaching Tools

This new, frequently updated Kentucky Department of Education resource provides teachers, schools and districts with important standards-based teaching resources. You’ll find “Combined Curriculum Documents” (which organize Academic Expectations, Program of Studies, and Core Content for Assessment into one handy resource), sample curriculum maps, and standards-based units of study.

[www.education.ky.gov/](http://www.education.ky.gov/) and click on “Teaching Tools.”



# Commissioner's Comments

## Increasing mathematics skills must be a priority

By Gene Wilhoit

gwilhoit@kde.state.ky.us

When I speak with people across the state — educators and community leaders alike — I tell them that our test data show that Kentucky's investment in its education system is paying off. All demographic groups of Kentucky children are performing at much higher levels now than in 1990 when we began the monumental task of reforming education in this state.

Kentucky students also are performing better, in comparison to their peers nationwide, than they ever have before. While we can't say that we're Number One, we have moved our public education system from among the poorest-performing in virtually every measure of education quality. Kentucky is now at a point where the achievement in our schools outranks other states.

However, Senate Bill 168, passed by the 2002 General Assembly, requires us to look beyond the overall performance of Kentucky's school children and address



Wilhoit

the individual learning needs of each and every individual student in all seven content areas.

Additionally, the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires that our Title I schools make Adequate Yearly Progress in reading and mathematics for each and every student group,

regardless of race, diverse learning needs or family income.

Kentucky schools are moving students along at higher levels than ever before. However, when we use these two laws and our CATS data to measure school success, achievement gaps on the pathway to proficiency by 2014 come into sharper focus.

Perhaps the harshest reality of the results we're seeing lies in the state's mathematics scores. In general, Kentucky schools have a long way to go in preparing our students to

be proficient in mathematics at the postsecondary level or in the work force.

And, we have major problems transitioning our high school graduates to college. Low ACT mathematics scores and the lack of coherence between K-12 and higher education are sending large numbers of our high school graduates into remedial college mathematics classes. Too many business and industry leaders report recent high school graduates possess unacceptable mathematics skills as they enter the job market.

We know Kentucky's core content provides a rigorous curriculum that should prepare students with solid mathematics skills for adult life. The core content is aligned closely with the national mathematics standards and the standards used by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

We are progressing, yet we are not making strong gains. We continue to lag behind many other states in mathematics.

Where is the disconnect?

I believe that in order to help our students gain the mathematics skills they need to be successful adults, every school and district must closely examine its mathematics program. Is what students are expected to learn aligned vertically and horizontally so that every student is on course for proficiency in mathematics by graduation? Are the district's high school graduates successful in college mathematics? Do they have the mathematics skills to find good jobs?

Building a rigorous mathematics program is like building a house. Students must have a firm foundation in the basic skills of addition and subtraction before they can begin to use their higher-level problem-solving skills in multiplication and division.

Each year, a teacher must add new knowledge and skills to every student's mathematics foundation so they are building toward higher-level Algebra, Geometry, Data Analysis, Statistics and Calculus. If one teacher fails to add to the foundation, a gap appears.

The next teacher must accelerate to eliminate the gap and continue to add to the foundation of skills. Too many gaps in knowledge will thwart a student's further attempts to learn higher-level skills.

Is this the reason we're seeing a fairly strong mathematics showing in most elementary schools and then seeing student progress slow in our middle schools and nearly come to a halt in our high schools?

It may be a contributing factor. However, I believe we must move beyond placing blame and quickly find solutions for increasing student mathematics skills.

It's easy to say that we need more money. However, it is also true. Elementary reading programs are good examples of how grant money (through Reading First and other literacy initiatives) is

paying big dividends in increased literacy skills. We have not provided the same funding for mathematics — and the progress of our students on state and national mathematics assessments shows it.

The time is right for the Kentucky Department of Education — and local schools and districts — to become aggressive about seeking similar funding for our mathematics programs and produce similar gains in this content area. We can provide additional professional development for teachers in mathematics, as well as more classroom resources, materials and tools.

We also must examine how our core content is being taught:

- Do teachers need help with their presentation of mathematics concepts?
- Do teachers have instructional materials that are standards- and problem solving-based?
- Do schools and districts need help aligning the mathematics curriculum?
- Do we need to take a closer look at what we're teaching and create classes that offer students more practical, as well as technical, applications of mathematics?

These are questions that must be answered before Kentucky can produce students who are proficient in mathematics. We're trying to address some of these questions in the department's Refocusing High School initiative. As we examine the reasons students don't pursue higher-level mathematics courses, we can "work backwards" toward the deficiencies in programs.

I want and need to hear your opinions on what Kentucky needs to do to increase mathematics proficiency. If your school and district has created a mathematics program that is moving your students to proficiency, let me know so we can feature some programs in future issues of *Kentucky Teacher* and get the word out in other ways.

If you've read this far, you may be asking yourself, "Won't he ever be satisfied? Is the department going to continue to dissect every accomplishment?"

I believe, as educators, we must have high expectations for all Kentucky students if we are to move our schools to proficiency by 2014. Because of that, we can never be satisfied that we are doing enough to give our young people the quality education they need to be productive citizens and competitive wage-earners in the 21st century job market.

I really can't envision the day when we'll say, "We don't need to improve any more!" True education reform means continuous improvement and constant challenge, both for students and educators.

Together, we can do great things for our students!

To comment on this topic, send e-mail to the commissioner at [gwilhoit@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:gwilhoit@kde.state.ky.us).



Photo by Rick McComb

### *Trying to solve the problem*

North Laurel High School student Levi Sawbush gets help with a mathematics problem from teacher Roger Wright during a class in the district's Credit Recovery Program this summer. Though Kentucky's core content provides a rigorous mathematics curriculum that should prepare students with solid skills for adult life, many students are leaving high school unprepared for mathematics at the postsecondary level or in the work force, says Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit.



## ‘Kids Care’ helps students understand their elders

Kentucky teachers have a new resource for teaching primary students to value their elders. The Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services developed the “Kids Care” coloring book as part of a two-year elder abuse awareness campaign.

The book, which can be downloaded from the Internet, includes multicultural coloring pages showing happy children reading, baking cookies, flying kites and playing dress-up and ball with the loving older people in their lives. The coloring book also includes a search puzzle and space for students to draw their favorite older person.

Additionally, teachers can download suggested instructional activities such as:

- inviting older relatives to talk about what it was like when they were youngsters or to share stories about their childhood
- comparing a child’s average day with an elder’s average day at the same age
- comparing children’s toys with toys that elders played with as children
- drawing pictures of a child’s favorite older person and explaining why the elder is so important to the child
- talking about what being “old” means to the children and asking older people what it means to them
- talking about what being “young” means to children and asking older people what it means to them
- comparing children’s hands and faces to older hands and faces
- spending a day without watching TV and discussing what children’s lives were like when there was no television

The coloring book has been reviewed and approved for use by the Kentucky Department of Education as an instructional resource with primary students to address the following Academic Expectations and Program of Studies categories:

### **Academic Expectation 2.29: Individual Well-being**

Health - Students will recognize the concept of an individual’s responsibility to others.

Health - Students will demonstrate responsibility to oneself and others.

Health - Students will recognize that growth and development are unique to each individual.

Health - Students will become aware of conflict resolution and communication strategies.

### **Academic Expectation 2.32: Mental Wellness**

Health - Students will identify what they like about themselves and others.

Health - Students will identify unique characteristics of others.

Health - Students will demonstrate respect for others.

### **Academic Expectations 2.16 & 2.17: Culture and Society**

Social Studies - Students will understand that diverse groups cel-



brate heritage/culture in a variety of ways.

Social Studies - Students will recognize the roles individuals have in various groups.

Social Studies - Students will understand how human needs are met through social groups and institutions.

Social Studies - Students will examine concepts of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination.

The coloring book and instructional activities can be downloaded at: <http://cfc.ky.gov/elderabuse/>. Choose “PUBLICATIONS” from the menu at the left of the screen, then scroll to the “Students” section at the bottom of the “PUBLICATIONS” page.

## Science teacher survey raises questions across nation

How can Kentucky science teachers — and science teachers across the country — better prepare public school students for the scientific and technological skills they will need for 21st century jobs? That question is on the minds of education, government and business leaders following the June release of data from the “Kentucky Survey of Critical Technologies.”

This study, released by the Kentucky Science and Technology Corp. (KSTC), looked at the depth of knowledge and understanding Kentucky science teachers have concerning critical technologies and concepts forming the basis for many advances in science and technology, as well as new job creation. KSTC seeks to advance science and technology through education, research and development, and entrepreneurial enterprise development.

The online study surveyed a representative cross section of Kentucky middle and high school science teachers. The survey asked teachers about their awareness, familiarity and plans for classroom integration of 25 scientific and technological concepts identified as important growth areas in Kentucky’s innovation-driven economy. These concepts, such as biotechnology, proteomics, alternative fuels, nanotechnology and quantum computing, are representative of five broad areas targeted for investments in Kentucky:

- Biosciences
- Human health and development
- Environmental and energy technologies
- Information technology and communications
- Materials science and advanced manufacturing

The survey shows a large disconnect between technologies with significant global economic and social impacts and their infusion into today’s P-12 classrooms. This disconnect may represent a contributing factor in Kentucky’s lack of adequately prepared young people to create and grow the innovation-driven companies essential to the state’s future, according to the report.

The survey’s findings consistently showed that responding science teachers have a general awareness of a limited number of terms. However, far fewer teachers understand the concepts well enough to present them in the classroom. While portions of the teachers understand some of the concepts, this did not seem to translate into classroom activities in any significant numbers.

For example, only 7 percent of the teachers surveyed indicate they are teaching nanotechnology, one of the world’s most explosive new technologies, in their classrooms. In fact, more than two-thirds of the concepts are being taught by fewer than 10 percent of the teachers. Of the remaining one-third of the concepts, only one is being taught by more than 26 percent of the teachers.

“We believe that this study has national implications...and that the results would be fairly consistent across the nation,” said Mahendra Jain, executive director of the Kentucky Science and Engineering Foundation, an initiative of KSTC and primary sponsor of the study.

Gov. Ernie Fletcher has asked KSTC, working in partnership with the Council on Postsecondary Education, the Kentucky Department of Education, innovation-driven Kentucky companies and others, to develop a strategic response to the survey results. Joanne Lang, KSTC executive vice president, said an award from the National Alliance of State Science and Mathematics Coalitions will help support initial development of the response to the study.

In the meantime, KSTC invites reactions and suggestions from educators across the state on how best to infuse these types of modern science concepts into age- and grade-appropriate learning activities. Send comments and inquiries to Joanne Lang at [jlange@kstc.com](mailto:jlange@kstc.com) or contact her at (859) 233-3502, ext. 236.

Educators can learn more about the survey during Lang’s presentation at the annual meeting of the Kentucky Science Teachers Association, Nov. 18-20 in Lexington. For more information about the Kentucky Science and Technology Corp., visit [www.kstc.com](http://www.kstc.com) on the Web.



### *Learning from their elder*

Derek Kitts, left, Cody Pauly and Malcom France, students at North Pointe Elementary in Boone County, listen intently as volunteer tutor Carl Hennigen explains a mathematics concept. Hennigen, who is a retired employee of Cinergy Corp., is one of many parents, grandparents and members of the community who volunteer at the school to help increase student achievement and success.

Photo by Rick McComb



## Watch for environmental studies survey in October

During October, 10,000 Kentucky public school teachers will receive an online questionnaire at their school e-mail addresses. The survey will ask teachers if and how they integrate different dimensions of the environment — for example, cultural values, local communities, environmental health, wildlife, water resources, air quality, energy, pollution — into the subjects they teach.

The survey will ask if the teachers are interested in professional development programs that would help them use the environment as a context for teaching in their content areas.

Those who respond will have the opportunity to describe the type of environment-based professional development programs they want.

The survey results will help the Kentucky University Partnership for Environmental Education — KUPÉE, sponsor of the survey and a coalition of environmental education centers at Kentucky's eight public universities, plan its future services and programs. KUPÉE seeks to increase the environmental literacy of all Kentuckians through environment-based education to ensure the protection and sustainable development of Kentucky's natural and cultural resources.

KUPÉE centers at each partnership university provide environment-based education to their students, with special emphasis on professional development for teachers. The centers also coordinate regional environmental edu-

cation services, develop environmental programs and curricula, conduct environment-based education research and program evaluation, and present perspectives on the environment and data. The Web site address is <http://kupee.uky.edu>.

Environment-based education uses the environment to create a wider and more place-based learning context for students, teachers and the community. It emphasizes interdisciplinary integration of subject matter, problem-based and issue-based learning experiences, team teaching, learner-centered instruction, constructivist approaches and self-directed learning. A similar term, "environment as an integrating context," is used by the State Education and Environment Roundtable ([www.state.ky.us/agencies/envred/](http://www.state.ky.us/agencies/envred/)).

Environment-based education helps teachers meet standards across multiple disciplines within a single curriculum. Its emphasis on higher-order thinking has already been shown to increase academic achievement in reading, mathematics, science and social studies. Its focus on the immediate environment and the local community makes learning relevant, interesting and compelling to students.

The KUPÉE centers ask teachers to check their e-mail during October and complete and return the questionnaire. For additional information, contact Jane Eller, director, Kentucky Environmental Education Council, toll free at (800) 882-5271, [jeller@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:jeller@kde.state.ky.us).

## Spark student interest in Kentucky history

Looking for Kentucky-specific programs that will kindle your students' interest in history? Two programs offered by the Kentucky Historical Society may be just what you're seeking.

The Kentucky Junior Historical Society (KJHS) is a membership organization that encourages students in grades K-12 to become active participants in the history of their community, region or state. Operating through a network of chapters, KJHS is organized at the school level with teachers serving as sponsors.

KJHS membership benefits include free admission to state historic sites and subscriptions to the Timeline newsletter and a student magazine, Kentucky Heritage. Chapters also can attend regional rallies held each fall at historic sites around the state and an annual convention each spring in Frankfort.

National History Day is a year-long educational program that engages students, grades 6-12, in the process of discovery and interpretation of history topics. Students produce dramatic performances, imaginative exhibits, multimedia documentaries and research papers based on topics related to an annual theme. Each participant's project is evaluated at the district, state and national level. Finalists from each contest advance to the next level of competition. Prizes and scholarships are offered at each round.

For more information about these programs, contact Carrie Dowdy at (502) 564-1792, ext. 4402, or e-mail at [carrie.dowdy@ky.gov](mailto:carrie.dowdy@ky.gov). You also may visit <http://history.ky.gov> on the Internet for more information about other Kentucky Historical Society programs.



### Outdoor class

Science teacher Mark Felts works with student Shawnda McCulley on a laptop computer in the outdoor classroom at South Laurel High School. The portability of laptop computers and access to wireless network technology allow Kentucky students at all grade levels to work on classwork, homework and other projects at their own pace and at many locations on school campuses.

Photo by Rick McComb

## Special education programs on KET

Special education in Kentucky is the topic of two Kentucky Educational Television (KET) programs during September.

On Sept. 7, KET reporter Renee Shaw will host a panel of education experts and parents of children with special needs for the program titled "Children with Special Needs: Public School Resources." The program begins at 10 p.m. (EDT).

Panelists will talk about who is eligible for special education services in Kentucky public schools and how special education works — from developing an individual education program and writing educational goals to the successful implementation of a special education program.

"Children with Special Needs: From High School to Community" is the title of the program scheduled to air Sept. 14 at 10 p.m.

Planning for the transition after high school begins years earlier for students with special needs. Shaw will again moderate panelists as they look at the types of tools that families and teachers can use to help students make some decisions about life after high school.

Panelists also will take a look at different types of independent and supported living, employment options and the role of vocational rehabilitation, postsecondary education opportunities, and recreation and leisure options that are available in Kentucky.

Both programs will be re-broadcast later this school year on KET's instructional channel. For more information, contact the KET Education Division toll free at (800) 432-0951 or visit the Web at [www.ket.org/education/parenting](http://www.ket.org/education/parenting).



## Talk to Us!

Kentucky Teacher wants to know what you think, what you need from the Department of Education, what you want to see in future issues.

**E-mail:** [kyteacher@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:kyteacher@kde.state.ky.us)

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1914 Capital Plaza Tower  
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# Read & Discuss

## On the Banks of the Amazon /En las orillas del Amazonas

Reviewed by Vickie Short

Hazard Independent Schools

As a librarian for grades 3 through 8, I am constantly on the lookout for books that science teachers can use in their classrooms. "On the Banks of the Amazon/En las orillas del Amazonas" is an adventure that quickly takes young children into the world of exotic foliage and the wondrous creatures that live in the Amazon rainforest.

This book also would appeal to teachers and readers of Spanish. The book contains a brief glossary that lists English words and their Spanish equivalents.

Full-color illustrations face each page of text and transport readers to a lush, untamed world. The story follows two hunters on a safari as they see the rainforest flora and fauna for the first time. The hunters are curious about the animals, and they discover that the animals are just as curious about them.

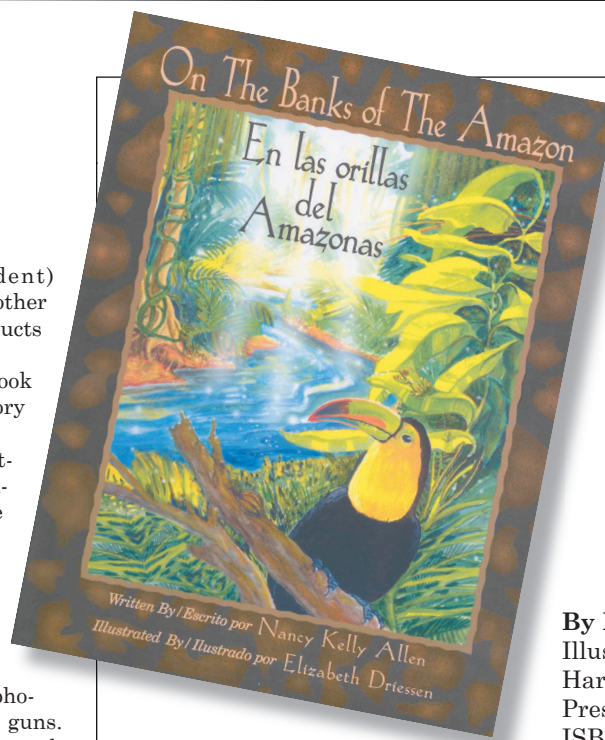
Although it's a story about a far-away place, this book has Kentucky ties. The author of "On the Banks of the Amazon/En las orillas del Amazonas" is Nancy Kelly Allen, a former library media spe-

cialist in Hazard (Independent) Schools. She is the author of six other picture books for children and conducts classroom programs about writing.

Other reviewers have given this book high marks for the bilingual story about life in the rainforest:

"...the story builds as the two hunters search from dawn to dusk for animals to aim at and shoot. As the reader is introduced to howler monkeys, poison dart frogs, jaguars, pink dolphins, sloths, piranhas and Aztec ants, the hunters are always there watching and waiting. Finally, on the last page, the hunters are revealed as photographers "shooting" cameras, not guns. The surprise twist makes the book work in a whole new way. It is no longer the story of a tragedy about to happen, but rather a delight in learning about another place." —*ForeWord Magazine*, February 2004

"...The text is rhythmic in both English and Spanish, giving a factually accurate description of a particular niche in this disappearing habitat. Both text and pictures are bordered with the bright detailed watercolor illustrations, both re-



By Nancy Kelly Allen

Illustrated by Elizabeth Driessen  
Hardback, 31 pages; Raven Tree Press, 2004;  
ISBN 0-9720192-7-8

inforcing and augmenting the text..." —*School Library Journal*, December 2003

Share "On the Banks of the Amazon/En las orillas del Amazonas" as a read-aloud with kindergarten and second-year primary students. Older primary and 4th-grade students will enjoy reading the

book independently. Either way, it makes a great addition to the school or classroom library.

(Vickie Short is a library media specialist at Roy G. Eversole Elementary School in Hazard.)

## Hall Elementary receives national library grant to purchase books

Hall Elementary School in Harlan County recently was selected from more than 1,200 school applicants from across the country to receive a \$5,000 grant from the Laura Bush Foundation for America's Libraries. Hall Elementary is the only Kentucky school to receive the grant.

The foundation awarded only 136 grants nationwide. The grants, totaling more than \$660,000, were awarded on need and how schools plan to use the money to update, extend and diversify their book and print collections.

Hall's library media specialist Chamayne Metcalfe provided information to secure the grant. "I just explained what our area is like," she said. "I explained that Harlan was once a booming coal town, we have a very depressed economy right now and a high unemployment rate."

She also supported the school's need for money to buy library books by providing statistics from the U.S. Census and state and local education data on the grant application, she said.

Metcalfe plans to use the majority of the grant to purchase resource materials to help improve the school's sagging test scores in social studies and science. She will order a set of 149 elementary science books and a collection of 131 social studies tradebooks for young people, she said.

She also will purchase high-interest books for young male readers and books to supplement the school's Kentucky and Appalachia collections.

For more information about Hall Elementary's library program, contact Chamayne Metcalfe, (606) 573-1950, Ext. 2532; or e-mail at cmetcalf@harlan.k12.ky.us. For information about the Laura Bush Foundation for America's Libraries, go to [www.laurabushfoundation.org](http://www.laurabushfoundation.org) on the Web.



Photo by Rick McComb

### Freedom to read

Lauren Welsh, a 4th-grader at Saffell Street Elementary in Anderson County, relaxes on the carpeted floor of the school library to read. School libraries throughout the state will observe Banned Books Week, Sept. 25 - Oct. 2, to remind students and adults that they have the freedom to choose books they want to read and to express their opinions through the written word. The Harry Potter book series is among the 100 most frequently challenged books in the last 14 years in American libraries. For more information about the week, go to [www.ala.org/bbooks/](http://www.ala.org/bbooks/) on the American Library Association Web site.



## Summit Elementary recognized for parent involvement program

Parents are valued partners in education at Summit Elementary. This Boyd County school provides programs and services that help parents get involved in the day-to-day work of moving their children toward proficiency.

Because of its work to build a strong and focused learning community through parent involvement, Summit recently was named a 21st Century School of Distinction. Intel Corp., Scholastic Administrator and the Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence Foundation created this awards program.

Summit received the Achievement Award for Involved Parents/ Teachers and \$120,000 in cash, professional development resources, software, hardware, and curriculum materials and equipment. It is the only Kentucky school and one of only 20 other schools in the nation to receive the School of Distinction designation.

Summit Elementary also has been named a model school for the National Reading Styles Institute and in 2002 was one of 10 reading leadership sites for Kentucky. Recently, Summit has been named a model school for the Kentucky Reading Project.

At Summit, parent volunteers arrive every morning at 7:30 to begin their work. To help prepare volunteers for their duties in the school, staff members provide professional-level training for volunteers in various school programs. Staff also help parents hone their technology skills, so they can continuously improve their daily volunteer work.

Summit's parent-leadership team meets six times during the school year. They are involved in all areas of the school. They discuss the school's strategic plan, its federal programs and other areas of concern, such as gap analysis of test scores from state and federal assessments.

Four parent volunteers are fellows in Kentucky's Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership program. After completion of their leadership training, they received money from the Institute to start a parent-run reading program at the school.

In addition, the Family Resource Center coordinates parenting classes, family reading nights, parent universities, mental health counseling, holiday support to needy families, and schoolwide reading and arts festivals. The center also offers family crisis counseling and assistance, and the school operates a day-care center during the workweek.

This is not the first time that Summit's parent volunteer program has received national attention. The school's parent-involvement coordinator, Norma Meek, regularly hosts visitors from universities and different states who want to see the school's parenting program in action.

At Summit Elementary School, students are not "at risk," but "at promise." The faculty ensures that learning extends across the curriculum through multiple opportunities for students to explore the arts, technology, physical education and character education. And, they make certain that parents are involved in every aspect of student learning.

For more information about Summit's parent involvement activities, contact Boyd County Parent Involvement Coordinator Norma Meek at (606) 928-6533 or by e-mail at [nmeek@boyd.k12.ky.us](mailto:nmeek@boyd.k12.ky.us) or Tamala Martin, Summit principal, at [tmartin@boyd.k12.ky.us](mailto:tmartin@boyd.k12.ky.us). Visit [www.blueribbonsschools.com/](http://www.blueribbonsschools.com/) to learn more about the 21st Century School of Distinction Awards for 2005.



Photo by Rick McComb

### Concentrating on the action

Hawthorne Elementary student Austin Frank is absorbed in watching a performance at the Jefferson County School's gym. Hawthorne is an immersion school where all students learn to speak Spanish and study the Hispanic culture. National Hispanic Heritage Month is Sept. 15 through Oct. 15.

## Student engineers learn to build future cities

The National Engineers Week Future City Competition™ each year invites middle school students nationwide to create cities of tomorrow. The competition encourages interest in mathematics, science and engineering through hands-on applications.

The Kentucky Regional Competition will be held Jan. 8, 2005, at the University of Kentucky College of Engineering. Kentucky's first-place winners will join teams from 36 other regions for an all-expense-paid trip to the National Finals in Washington, D.C., Feb. 21-23 during Engineers Week. Grand prize is a trip to U.S. Space Camp in Huntsville, Ala.

Working with a teacher and volunteer engineer mentor, students first design a city on computer using SimCity 3000 software, which is provided free to each school by California-based Maxis. Each team then builds a large, three-dimensional scale model.

At the regional competitions, the student teams present and defend their designs to a panel of judges. This year, students also must write an essay on the topic, "How can futuristic transportation systems efficiently use aggregate materials (stone, sand and gravel) as a basic construction product?"

Wrestling with such challenges is typical of Future City, according to Carol Rieg, the program's national director. "Future City has plenty of room for imagination and fun, and this is what draws the students in," says Rieg, "but it's the program's academic difficulty that keeps them involved. Students who might otherwise feel there's no purpose in learning math and science end up spending hours using those very subjects to find solutions for their city. They have a stake in their city, and they'll do whatever work is required to achieve their goals."

Registration deadline for Kentucky schools to enter regional competition is Oct. 15. For more information, contact regional coordinator Diana Anderson at (606) 337-4386 or [danderson@pineville.k12.ky.us](mailto:danderson@pineville.k12.ky.us). Interested teams also can visit [www.futurecity.org](http://www.futurecity.org) or call toll-free (877) 636-9578.

The National Engineers Week Future City Competition is sponsored by the Engineers Week Committee, a consortium of professional and technical societies and major U.S. corporations, co-chaired in 2005 by ASME (The American Society of Mechanical Engineers) and BP, p.l.c.

## Changed your address?

Kentucky Teacher receives mailing addresses for all Kentucky certified classroom teachers and administrators from the Kentucky Teachers' Retirement System. If you are employed by a Kentucky public school, you can change your address in one of two ways:

1. Complete a change of address form that can be downloaded from the retirement system's Web site at <http://ktrs.ky.gov/ktrsresources/MEMinfo/chgaddrnew.htm>
2. Submit a written request that includes your old address, new address and your social security number

Mail the form or your written request to:  
Kentucky Teachers' Retirement System  
Attn: Tammy Brown  
479 Versailles Rd.  
Frankfort, KY 40601

If you are not a current teacher or administrator, e-mail your change of address to [kyteacher@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:kyteacher@kde.state.ky.us) or send your change of address information in writing to:

Kentucky Teacher  
1914 Capital Plaza Tower  
500 Mero St.  
Frankfort, KY 40601  
Photo by Rick McComb  
Education on display



# Gill uses creative classroom teaching strategies to make physics exciting and intriguing for secondary students

By Joy Barr

jbarr@kde.state.ky.us

Exciting, intriguing and creative aren't the terms many high school students would use to describe their study of the interaction between energy and matter in physics classes.

"Physics is a subject that seems to be very difficult to many students, but is actually quite logical," says Karen Gill, physics teacher at Henry Clay High School. She tries to show her students the logic by taking that rigorous subject matter, applying the scientific concepts to real life and making physics fun and interesting.

Her ability to do just that and spur her students to success helped earn this Fayette County educator the 2003 Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. Gill is one of two teachers to represent Kentucky in the most recent awarding of the nation's highest recognition for teaching in science and mathematics. The National Science Foundation administers the award program.

David Taylor, a science specialist for Fayette County Public Schools and a former Presidential Award winner, nominated Gill for the award. "Karen has a strong grasp of content and works very well with her students. She brings unique activities to her students that keep them interested and achieving at high levels," said Taylor.

Gill's creativity lends well to her hands-on teaching philosophy. Her teaching style includes using a textbook only as a reference for students instead of a main instructional tool. She creates interactive opportunities for her students by using experiments and hands-on lab practicums that can be applied to daily life situations.

"I want my students to develop a conceptual understanding of science rather than just memorizing a number of facts," said Gill.

Tama Thé, one of Gill's former students, said he benefited from the classroom interaction. "I really liked being able to work in small groups to plan and conduct experiments. Mrs. Gill was always available to guide us as we had questions," said Thé.

Gus Tate, another student, especially likes the lab practicums and the online homework. "I really like the instant feedback from the computer program. It confirms my understanding of the topic," said Tate. "This

class will help prepare me for studying astrophysics at Princeton."

Rachel Kelly, another advanced physics student, agreed. "Mrs. Gill encourages us to work harder and smarter," she said. "We have to *think* and this also helps me in my

other classes."

Prominent in Gill's classroom is a "wall of toys." The display serves as a practical application of many physics projects completed by students.

Instruction in the classroom is organized

## Karen Gill

Teacher at Henry Clay High School since 1992; Teaches Advanced Physics and AP Physics II

Degrees: Bachelor of Arts, Transylvania University; Master of Science in Education, University of Kentucky; National Board Certification

Contact: Karen Gill, (859) 381-3423; kgill@fayette.k12.ky.us

## About the PAEMST

The Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, the nation's highest commendation for K-12 science and mathematics teachers, recognizes a combination of innovative and creative instruction that brings science, engineering and mathematics to life in the classroom. The program recognizes elementary and secondary teachers in alternating years. A grant of \$10,000 from the National Science Foundation is awarded to a state-level winner in each content area and includes a trip to Washington, D.C.

Award winners are selected based on excellence in teaching, leadership abilities, continuing education activities and dedication.

For information about the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, call Kentucky Department of Education science consultant Jackie Hensley or mathematics consultant Ann Bartosh at (502) 564-2106; or e-mail them at jhensley@kde.state.ky.us or abartosh@kde.state.ky.us.

to engage students in all phases of model development, evaluation and application in concrete situations. Gill sets the stage for student activities, typically with a demonstration and class discussion to establish common understanding.

Then, in small groups, students collaborate in planning and conducting experiments that will help them answer or clarify the question. Students are required to present and justify their conclusions in oral and written form.

Outside the classroom, Gill doesn't leave physics far behind. Her husband Scot is a physics teacher at Tates Creek High School, also in Fayette County. He was a Kentucky recipient of the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching for 2002.

Karen Gill conducts workshops for local science teachers as part of the Physics Teacher Resource Agent Program of the National Science Foundation and American Association of Physics Teachers. In addition, she works with Newton's Attic, a local program that allows students to develop and test large-scale, hands-on science projects.

She also works with Appalachian Explorers, a summer program for Eastern Kentucky middle school students. She has judged the Kentucky/American Science Fair for the past 10 years.



Physics teacher Karen Gill, far right, watches students experiment with static electricity using a Van de Graaff generator to build an electric charge. The student with his hand on the generator is passing electrical current through the line of students seated on the lab table.

Photo by Rick McComb



## BOARD from Page 1

the scoring weight given to on-demand writing and portfolio writing, and considering other ways to assess writing proficiency. The group also is studying methodologies used by other states and strategies for strengthening the writing support system for teachers.

Additionally, the assessment of arts and humanities is being analyzed in an attempt to move it from a paper-and-pencil exercise to a system that better assesses students' understanding and appreciation of the arts. Department staff are considering whether arts understanding can be better assessed by teachers at the local level as part of the statewide assessment strategy.

With the addition of annual reading and mathematics testing in grades 3-8 as required by the No Child Left Behind Act, Kentucky will have the ability to assess growth on the same group of students over time, beginning with data from the 2005-2006 school year. The board has directed the department to look at ways to incorporate this measure of growth into the accountability index.

In the future, the department will make recommendations to the board about ways the state might include a longitudinal component into the state's accountability system. The department also will help schools find ways to use this new information.

The board said schools need more immediate feedback regarding student performance on state assessments. The commissioner suggested that technology-based testing, scoring and data reporting show promise for quicker turnaround time. Online testing also would provide immediate access to student results. Current technology can be applied to the delivery of assessments, collection of student responses and the return of data, he said.

Using computer technology for testing is dependent on the ability of Kentucky's 176 districts to meet equipment requirements and procedures. Department staff continue to explore online testing as a

number of districts have volunteered to pilot technology-based assessment.

Immediate feedback to teachers will allow them to hold individual students accountable for their learning. Department staff is developing a scoring model that will return multiple-choice responses immediately and provide for on-site scoring on a number of released open-ended responses. Teachers will be able to use the results as they deem appropriate.

Although many states now require students to pass an exit exam for high school graduation, Wilhoit said he is not in favor of graduation being contingent upon a single exit exam. However, he pointed out that it is important for teachers to know whether or not students have mastered content well enough to move on, or whether students need additional support as they go forward.

The commissioner said the department is reviewing end-of-course assessments from other states and national vendors, and examining end-of-course assessments that are used in some Kentucky school districts and by the Kentucky Virtual High School. He said the goal is to make these kinds of assessments available for high school mathematics by January 2005, followed by similar assessments in English/language arts, science and social studies.

The board also learned that the department is looking into how Kentucky might produce formative assessments for teachers to use at their discretion. These "snapshot" assessments would give teachers diagnostic data on student performance during the course to help guide instruction along the way. (See related story on Page 1.)

The next meeting of the Kentucky Board of Education will be Sept. 14 in Frankfort. More information about the board is available at [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov). Click on "KDE QuickLinks" in the upper right-hand corner. Scroll down to "State Board of Education" and click.



Photo by Rick McComb

### *Education on display*

Owen Marshall demonstrates how he accesses lessons online at the Kentucky Virtual High School (KVHS) during the 2004 Education Showcase, hosted in August by the legislature's Interim Joint Committee on Education. Displays gave legislators information about 16 early childhood through adult education programs in Kentucky. Marshall, a senior, is taking three KVHS Advanced Placement classes and one class at Bardstown (Independent) High School this fall.

# Most Kentucky schools make NCLB progress in 2004

By Lisa Y. Gross

[lgross@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:lgross@kde.state.ky.us)

Preliminary data indicate that 75.7 percent of Kentucky's public schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Preliminary 2004 AYP results, released in early August, are based on scores from multiple-choice items in reading and mathematics on the Kentucky Core Content Tests.

A final report will be based on complete results of the core content tests, including open-response items. That report will be published in October.

"Since this is preliminary data, I would encourage schools, districts, parents and citizens to use caution when comparing 2004 results to those of 2003," said Kentucky Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit. "Changes in the implementation of NCLB from 2003 to 2004 cannot be evaluated until the final data is available. Even though the preliminary data looks

promising, it is possible that the status of schools or districts could change when final data is released in October."

According to the early data, 890 Kentucky public schools met 100 percent of their NCLB goals for AYP, while 286 schools did not. Each school and district has its own specific number of goals to meet to make AYP.

Schools that are funded by the federal Title I program will be subject to consequences if they do not make AYP in the same content area for two or more consecutive years. Up to five levels, or tiers, of consequences may be applied to those schools.

Statewide, preliminary data show that 111 Title I schools are in Tier 1 of consequences for not making AYP for two years. These schools must allow their students to transfer to better-performing schools and write or revise a school plan for improvement.

Twelve Title I schools are in Tier 2 for not making AYP for three years. These

schools must allow student transfers, offer supplemental services designed to increase student achievement and revise the school improvement plan. In addition to meeting all those requirements, the seven Title I schools in Tier 3 are subject to corrective action. This could mean replacement of administrators and teachers or closer district oversight.

The Title I program provides funds for schools to ensure that disadvantaged children receive opportunities for high-quality educational services. In Kentucky, 882 of the 1,205 schools participating in the state's assessment and accountability system are funded by Title I. All of the state's 176 school districts — with the exception of Anchorage Independent — receive some Title I funding.

School districts also are held to the requirements of AYP under NCLB. Of Kentucky's 176 school districts, 109, or 61.9 percent, met 100 percent of their target goals. For NCLB requirements, school districts are gauged on the total

student population. This can mean that, even if every school within a district makes AYP, the district may not because of the total size of subpopulations and their performance.

Signed into law in January 2002, NCLB requires states to provide information on schools' and districts' progress toward proficiency by 2014. Each state uses its own standards and assessments to make the annual determinations. Kentucky used data from the 2003 and 2004 administration of the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System to provide preliminary 2004 AYP information. The state also adopted a graduation rate formula for its high schools, as required by NCLB.

Detailed information on the AYP status of each Kentucky public school and district is available at [www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov). Go to "KDE QuickLinks" in the upper right-hand corner and click. Select "NCLB Reports" to access the data.



## SNAPSHOT from Page 1

a project that supported its vision. With the help of teachers, administrators and the district's technology resource teacher, Bret Foster, Wright worked with TransDigital Solutions in Lexington to create such a tool.

While TransDigital set up the software program, the district hired Anderson County mathematics teachers to create multiple-choice and open-response questions that could be used on the assessments. The result was an online program to assess 5th-grade mathematics skills.

The snapshot assessment program allows students to take practice tests in mathematics and receive immediate feedback. This feedback also can be sent to teachers, principals, administrators and parents by way of e-mail or printed reports.

According to Wright, the ability for all parties to see the results immediately allows students to be constantly evaluated, reinforced and directed toward proficiency.

The teacher can choose which elements of the core content to test, narrowing or widening the content covered as needed. A teacher can craft the assessment by personally setting an acceptable passing grade for each assessment. The 5th-grade mathematics teachers can use this tool as much or as little as needed or wanted.

"Whenever a teacher is ready to assess what he or she has instructed, it can be done at any time," said technology resource teacher Foster.

Students may take as long as needed and may use pencil, paper and calculators for the snapshot assessments. The multiple-choice portion gives students a chance to review answers before submitting them. The open-response portion provides at least one question for every bullet point of the content covered.

Foster eventually would like to collect benchmark answers for open-ended questions and provide that as a link in the report to the teacher. A scoring link and a benchmark link would provide an example of a novice, apprentice, proficient and distinguished answer to each question, he said.

After the student completes the assessment, a report is e-mailed to the teacher, the student and the parents. Parents without e-mail receive a printed copy of the report. The report shows the

student's score and answers, as well as those core content points that were most missed.

The report also provides links to supplemental material for the questions missed so the students and parents may review it together. There also is a tutorial to familiarize parents with the material.

These formative assessments permit teachers to receive feedback on what students are learning along the way rather than at the end of the course when, in reality, it is too late. The teacher's report shows how the class scored, both individually and as a whole. The report also informs teachers about frequently missed material. Teachers can then use the report as a tool to guide further instruction.

According to Foster, the assessment also provides longitudinal data and documentation for principals and administrators. Using the reports over time, school administrators can see how classes are performing in the subject over the years, thus assessing teacher performance as well.

"Once we started seeing what we could actually do with this tool," Foster said, "we see more and more ideas that could fit into this model."

Foster said the biggest benefit of the online assessments is immediate feedback.

"It offers proficiency now, not next year," Foster said, referring to the current time lag between when students take state assessments and the scores are reported.

Anderson County continues to expand the online assessments they have created with TransDigital Solutions. In fact, they have shared their content with other districts and have presented this project at state and national conventions.

"We realize that continuous assessment will allow Kentucky's children the opportunity to truly know their level of achievement," Wright said. "It is our vision to see a KDE (Kentucky Department of Education) user-friendly interface on the Web that would encourage teachers, administrators and students to access the site and allow a comprehensive wealth of knowledge that could be used to raise the bar of achievement for all of the children of Kentucky."

Contact: Charlotte Wright at (502) 839-2527 or [cwright@Anderson.k12.ky.us](mailto:cwright@Anderson.k12.ky.us) or Bret Foster at [bfoster@Anderson.k12.ky.us](mailto:bfoster@Anderson.k12.ky.us)



Bret Foster, Anderson County Schools' technology resource teacher, looks over the shoulders of Chelsea Lane and Allison Parrent as they use computers to complete a snapshot assessment of their mathematics skills at Saffell Street Elementary.

## MOUNTJOY from Page 1

Over the past six years, millions of dollars in grant money has been garnered for new reading programs in Kentucky schools. Kentucky's 4th and 8th graders are now scoring in the top half of the nation in reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests, which are administered to students across the country.

Mountjoy was closely involved in the months-long development of Kentucky's plan to implement the federal NCLB Act. She worked with state and federal officials to guarantee that the high standards of student performance set by the board for Kentucky students was not sacrificed in compliance with the national law. As a result, according to the Education Commission of the States, Kentucky is one of only five states that have already met or are on track to meet 40 key NCLB implementation requirements.

"We are not yet where we want to be and need to be in education in Kentucky," Mountjoy said. "Many challenges remain. But

we are on the right path, and I am confident that under new leadership we will continue to press forward until the vision becomes reality for every single child!" Mountjoy's term on the board expires in 2006.

Travis, whose term also expires in 2006 is serving his second four-year term on the board. Hilma Prather, a board member since May 2002, was selected as the new vice-chair.

Travis was a member and past chair of the Marshall County Board of Education, a member of the Kentucky School Boards Association's board of directors and past chair of the Marshall County Chamber of Commerce board of directors. He is an elder in the Benton Church of Christ and is presently vice president of human resources for Murray/Calloway County Hospital in Murray.

Prather, who lives in Somerset, is a retired teacher and principal. She is a former member of the Council on Postsecondary Education.

### Proposed assessments for all content, all grades

The Kentucky Board of Education and the Department of Education are currently reviewing options on how to improve student achievement through technologically administered assessments. The department is discussing with multiple providers how Kentucky might produce these formative assessments for teachers to use at their discretion.

The department's plan would not include these assessments in the state-required accountability calculations. Instead, the assessments would assist teachers with gathering diagnostic data that would inform their teaching.

Contact: Kentucky Department of Education assessment analyst Jay Roberts at (502) 564-4394 or [jroberts@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:jroberts@kde.state.ky.us)



# Leadership Letter

Compiled by Faun S. Fishback  
ffishbac@kde.state.ky.us

## Kentucky on track with NCLB requirements

Kentucky and four other states — Connecticut, New York, Oklahoma and Pennsylvania — have met or are partially on track to meeting all 40 requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, according to a report released this summer by the Education Commission of the States (ECS). The report gave the status of work on the federal requirements in each state and the District of Columbia as of March 2004.

The report can be purchased or accessed online at [www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/special/nclb/reporttothenation/reporttothenation.htm](http://www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/special/nclb/reporttothenation/reporttothenation.htm). The Web site offers a link to a state database that shows progress for each state in about 40 elements of the law.

## Meet the board, read its plan

Information about members of the Kentucky Board of Education and the board's strategic plan has been posted on the Kentucky Department of Education Web site ([www.education.ky.gov](http://www.education.ky.gov)).

An updated brochure contains the board's vision and mission, explains how the board functions and its responsibilities, outlines the role of the Commissioner of Education and provides general information about the board. Photos, biographical sketches and contact information for the board members and the commissioner also are available. The brochure must be downloaded.

The strategic plan, amended in 2004, identifies the board's core values and beliefs, goals and objectives for preschool through grade 12 education.

To access this information, click on "KDE QuickLinks" in the upper right-hand corner of the department's home page. Scroll down to "State Board of Education" and click.

## Investing in education helps boost economy

As state and local governments face tight budgets, a new Economic Policy Institute report shows that adequate and effective funding of education is the best way to achieve faster growth, more jobs, greater productivity and more widely shared prosperity.

"Smart Money: Education and Economic Development," by economic development expert William Schweke, shows how more investment in education — from preschool to college — spurs economic development through increases in productivity, learned skills, technology and workers' average earnings.

As public schools enroll more poor, minority or new immigrant students, they must have resources to provide these youngsters with a good education foundation and help them avoid many social problems stemming from poverty and inequality, and to eventually become productive, highly-skilled workers.

[www.epinet.org/content.cfm/book\\_smart\\_money](http://www.epinet.org/content.cfm/book_smart_money)



## Checking the data

During summer training in Frankfort, the newest cadre of Highly Skilled Educators toured Department of Education offices to learn more about state programs and services. Patty Elliot, currently working at Jackson County High School, left, and Lorraine Williams, currently working at Cardinal Valley Elementary in Fayette County, look over a Kentucky Performance Report with Roger Ervin while visiting his office in the Division of Validation and Research. The Highly Skilled Educators will receive new assignments to Kentucky's lowest-performing schools after the release of the 2004 Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) data in October.

## Average national teacher pay inches upward to \$45,771

Teachers across the nation were paid an average of \$45,771 last year, according to a survey conducted by the American Federation of Teachers. The typical teacher's salary went up 3.3 percent in 2002-2003, the last year for which figures are available from state education departments.

The pay range varies significantly by state, accounting for differences in cost of living and the way salary packages are set up. California paid the highest average salary, \$55,693. South Dakota had the lowest, \$32,414.

Kentucky ranked 37th in average teacher salaries in 2002-2003 at \$38,486. The salary of a beginning teacher in 2002-2003 was \$28,886, slightly lower than the national average of \$29,564.

[www.aft.org/news/salary\\_survey.htm](http://www.aft.org/news/salary_survey.htm)

## Small learning communities can help middle grades

Federal, state and local policymakers need to provide resources and support to create small schools at the middle-grades level, according to a policy state-

ment recently issued by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform. When small schools are not feasible, the statement says, district and school leaders should break down large middle-grades schools into smaller schools or small learning communities.

The Forum, which represents 65 organizations and foundations, gave these priorities for lasting positive change for young adolescents:

- a separate designation for middle-grades schooling as a distinct phase of education
- focus on adolescent literacy with support for advancing reading, writing and thinking in all the content areas
- qualified teachers in every middle-grades classroom who not only know their subjects but also how to teach those subjects to young adolescents
- smaller learning communities that help personalize instruction so students have the support they need
- additional resources for middle-grades schools and students, including more targeted research and dissemination of successful practices.

Read and download the policy statement from the Forum's Web site at [www.mgforum.org/Policy/small%20communities/page%201.htm](http://www.mgforum.org/Policy/small%20communities/page%201.htm)

## Report shows national drop in literary reading

Despite the resurgence of reading groups across the country, literary reading is on the decline in America. A National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) report, "Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America," says the number of non-reading adults increased by more than 17 million between 1992 and 2002.

According to the report, the largest rate of decline in literary reading was among the 18- to 24-year-old group. Education and family income also affect the literary reading rate.

"This isn't a case of 'Johnny Can't Read,' but 'Johnny Won't Read,'" said NEA chairman Dana Gioia in an interview with The Associated Press. "I think what we're seeing is an enormous cultural shift from print media to electronic media, and the unintended consequences of that shift."

[www.nea.gov/news/news04/ReadingAtRisk.html](http://www.nea.gov/news/news04/ReadingAtRisk.html)



# Pursuing their education

*Bowen kindergarten students track  
Gingerbread Man and learn about school*

For the 10th year, Bowen Elementary in Jefferson County welcomed its kindergarten students to school in August with a friendly challenge — “Find the Gingerbread Man!” The first-year primary students found clues posted throughout the building that would lead them to the elusive cookie and help acquaint them with their new school, teachers, classmates and daily schedule.

Students began the day making their own gingerbread man with cookie cutters and candy decorations. While the cookies baked, teachers helped their students follow the clues and navigate the hallways of the school.

The creation of Principal Stephen Tyra and his kindergarten staff, the search for the gingerbread man leaves students familiar with the school, knowing what to expect on their first day and carrying home a big gingerbread cookie of their own creation!



Photos by Rick McComb

At far left, Kip McCray uses his finger to make an indentation on his gingerbread man cookie for a candy decoration.

Bowen Elementary teacher Lynn Luking, above left, carefully lifts a cut-out cookie off the pan so that students can decorate it before baking.

Library media specialist Ann Jeanette Dale reads “The Night Before Kindergarten” to students during their stop in the media center while searching for the gingerbread man.



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